

ABSTRACT

During the winter and spring of 1984, Block 1191, located in Wilmington, Delaware, was the subject of intensive and extensive Phase III Data recovery investigations. Block 1191 was part of the Wilmington Boulevard National Register Historic District. Fieldwork and laboratory analysis were conducted by personnel from the University of Delaware, Center for Archaeological Research. Funding was provided by the City of Wilmington Parking Authority and the Federal Railway Administration, through the Delaware Department of Transportation. The purpose of the research was to provide compliance information to satisfy Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The research design governing the documentary and archaeological research was focused on exploring the material culture correlates of various social and economic characteristics of the inhabitants of the block through time. Testing on the block was confined to the backyard areas of three historic lots, because previous archaeological research had indicated extensive subsurface disturbance over much of the block. Archaeological remains of nine late eighteenth/early nineteenth century undisturbed barrel privies and trash pits, and two late nineteenth/early twentieth century brick-lined privies were uncovered and excavated. These were found to be preserved beneath extensive historic and modern filling, grading, and paving. Indepth ceramic, faunal, and floral analyses of the artifacts recovered from these features were conducted. Documentary evidence of the block's inhabitants found that most of the occupants were tenants rather than owner-occupiers, with the result that there was little historic information available concerning their households and socio-economic status. All of the undisturbed and dateable features were associated with these tenants. Thus the documentary evidence of the block's occupants could not be related to the archaeological data, and prevented the implementation of the original research plan. However, several new areas of research in Wilmington and other urban settings were developed as a result of this project. These are studies in diet and food consumption, archaeological evidence of diseases, and investigations of the slave and free black populations and their material remains in Wilmington.